

Football Behavior Management



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

July 2026



Any general questions for the Summer
School support team? Contact
amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl.

Course Details

Title	Football Behavior Management
Coordinator(s)	Marius Rietdijk
Other lecturers	Joost van der Leij
Form(s) of tuition	On campus and excursions
Approximate contact hours	48
Approximate self-study hours	24

Teaching staff (in order of appearance)

Dr. Marius Rietdijk

Associate Professor Marius Rietdijk is the coördinator of the FBM course. His field is OBM. He teaches OBM at the VU-university and he is the scientific director of the Aubrey Daniels Research Institute for Behavior Analysis (ADRIBA) of the VU-university. Marius Rietdijk is making sure that everything that is taught in the FBM course is scientifically grounded.

Joost van der Leij

Joost van der Leij is a VU-university certified OBM trainer/coach. Joost van der Leij has also developed the Bayesian models for data scouting that we use to find the right players. His predictive Bayesian player model has predicted on September 1st 2019 the results of the Eredivisie on January 1st 2020 with an 81% correlation, establishing a very strong relationship between the FBM stats of individual players and the results of the team they play for. Together with Patrick Busby he has written a book on football statistics (the Dutch title is "Voetbalstatistiek"). Besides the book on football statistics he has written over twenty other books among them a book on Cybernetic Big Five Theory, Triangulation and Bayesian statistics. Joost will deliver most of the scientific topics and data scouting.

Patrick Busby

Patrick Busby is the Sporting Director of FC Volendam. Patrick Busby has over 25 years of experience as a scout. Patrick Busby is known for having made possible the transfer of Rafael van der Vaart to Real Madrid. Patrick Busby has worked for FC Groningen, Ajax,

HSV and Brighton. Patrick will deliver the classes on how to become a scout and a sporting director.

Course description

How does one become a scout? Or a technical director of a football club? There really isn't a course you can take for that. That is what we want to change with our Football Behavior Management (FBM) course.

The main idea is to combine relevant scientific theory with practical know-how of professionals working as a scout, technical director or player agent. To make sure that the course is both relevant and fun to attend, we organize the course in such a way that it is as if you are part of a virtual club and already working as a scout for that virtual club. During the course you go and find new talent, apply the relevant scientific theories to your findings and present the talent you find to the decision makers of the virtual club.

The scientific part of the course will consist of:

1. Organizational Behavior Management (OBM). OBM is the most scientific way to bring the best out of people. OBM is targeted at work within organizations. So OBM is the best tool to optimize the workings of a club. Yet, the same principles that brings the best out of employees of the club, also brings the best out of players and the technical staff.
2. Cybernetic Big Five Theory (CB5T). CB5T is the most scientific way of looking at personality. Again, CB5T is a great tool to make sure you deeply understand the people you work with. Yet, it is also a great tool to understand the personalities of the players of the club. CB5T enables you to check whether a potential player fits within the team. And CB5T helps understand and optimize the relationships between the players and the technical staff.
3. Triangulation. The Triangulation model of communication explains why you always need three points to understand anything. In terms of football: the player, the manager and the game itself. Triangulation also explains why there are two modes of communication: (a) to clarify and (b) to influence. To work as a scout or a technical director you need both to be able to clarify why a potential player is the right choice and be able to influence the decision makers to make the right decision.
4. Viable System Model (VSM). VSM is a cybernetic approach to organizations. As we are already using cybernetics with CB5T it is only natural to also include VSM. VSM

is the most scientific way to model an organization and hence also a football club. The VSM model of the club allows you to diagnose the club for known weaknesses and revitalize the club by optimizing its structure.

5. Subjective Bayesian statistics. A lot of decisions that you need to take as a scout or technical director are clouded in uncertainty. Bayesian statistics is the most scientific way of dealing with uncertainty. For that reason during the course, you learn how to create your own Bayesian models and network to support your decision making as a scout or technical director.

We ourselves use these five scientific theories for finding the best players for clubs. Take for instance the case of Adrian Dalmau. We found Adrian Dalmau while he was still an unknown striker playing in Spain. On our advice Heracles hired Adrian Dalmau whose contract had ended so no transfer fee was paid. Using our Bayesian model we predicted that Adrian Dalmau would be worth 1.75 million euro to Heracles one year later. Adrian Dalmau became the #3 top scorer of the Eredivisie that year and indeed he was transferred to FC Utrecht for the amount of 700.000 euro and the transfer of Cyriel Dessers from FC Utrecht to Heracles. Cyriel Dessers was valued at that time for 1 million euro. Cyriel Dessers in turn was transferred to KRC Genk for a transfer fee of 4 million euro.

Learning objectives

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of organisational behaviour to achieve excellent results within a professional football organisation.
- Explain how OBM and ABA can help change organisational behaviour
- Show familiarity with the ABC model and ABC analysis.
- Discuss the main concepts in OBM/ABA and how they can help improve performance.
- Apply the OBM protocol to real-life behaviour.
- Model a professional football organisation with VSM.
- Use VSM to diagnose and optimise a professional football organisation.
- Use CB5T to understand people's needs, desires and goals.

- Understand how people's needs, desires and goals can help an organisation achieve its goals.

Assignments and Assessment

For the assignment each student has to write a player report of a player he or she has scouted, either live, from video or from data scouting or a combination. How to write a player report will be covered during the course. An example can be downloaded here:

<http://www.footballbehaviormanagement.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Thody-Elie-Youan-Scouting-Report.pptx>

The assessment is based for 90% on the report and for 10% on the presentation of the player in class.

Provisional reading list

We hope all participants will read the main sources. Additional sources are optional.

Organizational Behavior Management (OBM)

Main source:

- Daniels, Aubrey C. *Bringing out the Best in People: How to Apply the Astonishing Power of Positive Reinforcement*. McGraw-Hill, 2016.

Additional sources:

- Daniels, A. Performance Management: Changing Behavior that Drives Organizational Effectiveness (2004)
- Brethower, D.M. Behavioral Analysis in Business and Industry: A Total Performance System. Behaviordelia 1972

Cybernetic Big Five Theory

Main source:

DeYoung, C. G., & Weisberg, Y. J. (2019). Cybernetic approaches to personality and social behavior. In M. Snyder & K. Deaux (Eds). *Oxford Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology*, Second Edition (pp. 387–414). New York: Oxford University Press. [\[PDF\]](#)

Additional sources:

DeYoung, C. G. (2015). Cybernetic Big Five Theory. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 56, 33–58. [\[PDF\]](#)

DeYoung, C. G., & Krueger, R. F. (2018). A cybernetic theory of psychopathology. *Psychological Inquiry*, 29, 117–138. [\[PDF\]](#)

DeYoung, C. G. (2017). A cybernetic perspective on integrating personality structure, personality process, and personality development. *European Journal of Personality*, 31, 538–539. [\[PDF\]](#)

DeYoung, C. G. (2017). In defense of (some) trait theories: Commentary on Hogan and Foster (2016). *International Journal of Personality Psychology*, 3, 13–16. [\[full text\]](#)

Triangulation

Main source:

Donald Davidson - Three Varieties of Knowledge in Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective: Philosophical Essays Volume 3 2001

Viable System Model

Main source:

Hoverstadt, Patrick. The Fractal Organization: Creating Sustainable Organizations with the Viable System Model. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Additional sources:

Beer, Stafford. *Brain of the Firm: a Development in Management Cybernetics*. Herder and Herder, 1972.

Subjective Bayesian Statistics

Main source:

De Finetti, Bruno. Probabilism: A Critical Essay on the Theory of Probability and on the Value of Science," (translation of 1931 article) in *Erkenntnis*, volume 31, issue 2-3, September 1989, pp. 169–223.

Additional sources:

De Finetti, Bruno. Theory of Probability, (translation by A Machi and AFM Smith of 1970 book) 2 volumes, New York: Wiley, 1974-5.

Course Schedule

Nota bene: it is very hard to get football professionals to come and talk to us, especially in the summer because of the transfer window. So the programme can be changed on the fly to accommodate these professionals.

Nota bene 2: KAA Gent in Belgium has graciously offered us to come and visit them for a real match. This match will be in the weekend. We currently don't know the exact date, nor whether KAA Gent will play at home, which would make things easier. Nevertheless, Gent is a two hour drive from Amsterdam and in Belgium, so public transport back to Amsterdam in the evening is not possible. We will discuss in the class who wants to go, if we are able to go at all. For everyone who wants to go, we will figure out how. In the past we have been to FC Twente matches in Enschede which is even further away, although in the Netherlands. We will do our utmost best to make visiting a real club and a real match possible, so please be prepared to do some travelling and/or to seek lodging to spend the night in Gent Belgium over the weekend.

Day	Morning programme	Afternoon programme
Monday	OBM Basics	The player agent
Tuesday	CB5T Test	Video / Data scouting
Wednesday	VSM Basics	Free
Thursday	CB5T Basics	Live scouting
Friday	CB5T for football clubs	Free
Monday	OBM Protocol	The technical director
Tuesday	Bayesian Modeling Basics	Mental coaching

Wednesday	Bayesian Modeling for football players	Excursion if possible / free
Thursday	Triangulation & tacting	Presentations of scouted players
Friday	Triangulation & manding	Free

